

Sam Khieu
Period 4
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Oral History

Interviewer: Sam Khieu and Tim Nguyen

Interviewee: Rex Hoyt

SK: The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of the Century High School. The interviewer is Sam Khieu. The interviewee is Rex Hoyt. The interview took place at 12:00 on the 17 of May. OK.

SK: So, can you tell me what is the Site council? What is the particular job?

RH: Well...the way I view the job is kind of having an advisory board at school. Yeah, I think there is a state law mandates this, requirement what the make up is but I view the role is a board of director a company around the school

SK; okay, can you tell me how often you meet

RH; the years have varied. Sometimes, it was every two weeks. Sometimes it was every week depending on how long it was going on for a while. Every three weeks, so it varied according to need.

SK; did you meet anywhere around the school?

RH; upstairs where u call it the media center. The conference room.

SK is it early in the morning

RH; yea. It was 6:30 or something. Which is great cuz it was the first of the day.

SK: how long did it last.

RH; usually until teachers had to go at 7:30 to 7:45

SK; can you tell me about the block schedule

RH; the block schedule? Well it started before block. In fact part of the first year was the planning and research of the block schedule. It was kind of interesting the project learning of what block schedule was. The advantage and disadvantages.

SK; did u favor it?

RH; block schedule came about; I didn't know what it was. I had no idea what a block was. The more I read about it, the more I listened and talked about. There was a survey in a site that made it clearer that block was great. I mean it was great for the students

great for the school, and the success that the school is great. The turmoil dropped, the grades went up. Even some of the teachers that started out not totally into it, century shows that it was far better than it was before than the regular schedule. I think the system that century team came up with was great because it was AB and 4X4 it was a combination of it. That really was one of the successes.

SK; how did you get on the site council? Was there a prerequisite?

RH: I think I went to a parent meeting or something like an advisory board. Like the P.T.A. My daughter was a freshman class in the year the school opened. She graduated last year. I was at a meeting there and they for a volunteer and some other things in the area. And that work out.

SK; what is the typical agenda in the morning?

RH: well, a lot of them facing the school are setting policies and schedules. The block was the big item. I think we had some handbook issue, getting dress. Trying to attain dropouts and the drop out rate and how we can improve that situation. Grants and what grants were available. The workshops that were being affected for the teachers. Columbine and the security became heighten. It just basically what challenges were basically scored are brought up and goals and direction we're going to take.

TN; so the site council votes to have the block schedule

RH; well the site council, when the school opened the original vision was to change the structure of the school. And century was not a locomotive train in fact they were as a national as a whole we were closer to the caboose then the engine. And he had a vision that he wanted to change the situational process and from there, read material and background material and presentations of different schools and the pros and cons of the 4X4 and the AB. So the site council I believe was to originally go to the block. That was their recommendation to the staff because it was a change in their contract and worker that they required staff vote. In order to approve that. And that was an anxious moment whether it would pass or not pass to the faculty and they approved it and that was a big one in the first year then we did some planning how were going to do this and how were going to train this because it is going to change for everybody not just the students but the faculty itself. You cant just take two days worth of lecture and combine it into one block. And that was one of the things the students and teachers mature from this process. Everybody went from regular to block not everybody but a clear majority thought it was better.

TN; was the majority vote two thirds?

RH: oh no, it was like 80 percent. It wasn't like 51%. Then we had to go to board and teachers union and every year they had the same vote. In some ways its good and some ways its bad because it then seems like a lot of time the site council spend on works, you know, is it? What we need to do? And unfortunately we were using too much time on that

than any other issue, seems we were burning lots of time in here to input, the feed back, was very good, to getting feedback, How are we gonna do? The rest of the administration was varying well at that. Yeah. The neat thing was the issue was, it was not working for them. Well you know, we thought of giving them a block schedule, and let them cut it out. It seems to meet the need. I called it a broad view, you know, here's the box, you know, here's your parameter, make it work, the administration were willing to compromise.

SK: Beside the block schedule, were there any difficult decisions you had to make?

RH: When I left, they were working harder on the issue of a "school within a school", I had some concern, If we divide the school into two, the block was very important. I was afraid that the freshman's had some troubles. The schools had enough problems by itself. We don't need to create more territories and the whole goal here was not being a teacher but not losing freshman. You know, the freshmen's coming from small middle school, and coming here and being had to choose a division. The failures, the second classes. You know the students in the school. Getting lost in the process of transition. The percentage of failures will decline and that's the bottom line. The real emphasis is to improve that and keep kids in school. Give them that interest and help them. And I agree, that's most critical how do you tell somebody not in their best interest in school because they only get one shot at it. It makes a huge difference

SK: so how would you say the school is doing now then it first started because of the block schedule?

RH; I think it's doing great from the numbers that I saw. I think that they were pioneers in their field and the initial results came in with a grades improved and absentees going down. The hustle and bustle of changing classes seven or eight times a day has gone away. We had to massage the timing period because that was a big issue on getting from one end of the building to the other end with that small amount of time. I remember there was a hassle on what time do we start and what time do we finish. And part of that we came up with the schedule and the bus. What seems to be small all of a sudden is big but I think the staff is very good. I was glad to see the extra opportunities so that was a big thing there. Even the students like to say that they didn't like this but... and we're going back. Each year going back there would be concerns about the starting times of this or that. We need to separate block and nonblock. The starting time of the bus has got nothing to do with block and we need to keep those separate.

SK; what do you think of the activity seminar? Have you heard of it?

RH; the activity seminar is that to teachers. I think that is because the other schools are going to block and they're using that time to train for block. That is my understanding. Is that what is going on here?

SK; we start at like 9:15

RH: everyday? We start at 7:15. It just started a couple of months ago. And again, the problem is everybody's schedule. As I understand, the major push behind that was the district is changing to a trimester and the other two schools is going into some sort of

block and we're using that time to help train the teachers to get ready for the block and gain some more tools. It was changing, the way we did things. I can remember where one thing, a meeting upstairs in the lecture hall we were talking about something and everyone was concerned about the big change. Education before had been the same for years, 30, 40 50 years. 60 minutes or 50 minutes of class; the old schedule. You have fifty minutes to an hour for class and you have six or seven periods a day and that structure hadn't change at all. There wasn't anybody in that room that could say "has your job not changed in the last five years?" And that's even a long time. How many people in the work force that could say the way they do things in their job hasn't changed in the last five years. How many people can say it hasn't changed in the last three years? And I'm telling you that everyday there's change. Look at technology and here we are in the world of manufacturing education of the world providing education. The basic way hasn't changed for fifty sixty years. So wait a second here, something's not right here. So it was just something to get over and I think the block is great. I remember going back to college and it's the same thing. Monday Wednesday Friday class and there's Tuesday Thursday classes which is only two days a week and a little longer.

SK; was that the big meeting at the lecture hall the big frustration at the time?

RH; it wasn't really a frustration. It was just somebody was upset because they weren't told and they were sitting there and saying and these were parents "well, we're your boss" hold on here, timeout. I don't think so. They're a stockholder in the school. You get one vote and that's it.

SK; did you guys work on century's appearance to other schools?

RH: I don't know we go through appearance to other schools. We would talk about things affecting the school like sporting events and cheers going back and forth. We wanted to make sure we had proper class. There was a dress code and sometimes folks would not follow the dress code. The dress code had to be enforced by teachers.

SK; so back when the school opened the dress code was a pretty big deal?

RH; it wasn't a big deal because the code was already set. There were some issues that came into the site council because during the summer months people want to wear less then they should be wearing. The issue came up with the columbine with trench coats and that issue you had to fight. Its funny because dress code did come up and uniform came up. What an easy way to enforce dress code. They wouldn't have just one uniform but two or three. But there's a way get around that.

SK; what is your position on the dress code?

RH: it didn't bother me one way or another. Give somebody two or three choices and have at it. One thing that would also solve is the class. All the styles and pressure to wear the proper clothes and proper way and what if someone doesn't. It'll take that pressure away. The point was the school had a dress code.

TN: who was the one that decided what clothes were appropriate or not? Was that the site council?

RH: well no. The point was the school had a dress code. It wasn't what was appropriate and what wasn't. It was defined in the policy.

TN; was it altered at any time?

RH; no it wasn't. There was an issue on ID cards. It was causing frustration because they had to check people and check out the books. They were responsible that the library books don't walk and people don't come in. How do they know they are a student or a non-student? You had to show value to have these cards. There are 2000 students walking around. How are the teachers supposed to know who belongs to the school and who doesn't? When a parent sends their child to school they expect it to be a safe place and you have 100 staff covering 2000 students. How do you determine the good kids from the bad?

SK; if there was a class that needed to be create, do they need to come talk to you?

RH; they reviewed some of the curriculum changes. And they promoted. They would know about century's changes. A teacher was trying to put together P.E and health.

TN; would the site council make a class?

RH: the site council doesn't make a class but encourage the teachers to come up. And we would vote and support because it had to go through the district curriculum and they decide whether they want to do it or not.

SK; Thanks for the interview.

RH: Thank you.

TN: Bye.

SK:Bye